

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

(Section of the Library
Association)

Edited by T. E. Callander, A.L.A.

Fulham Public Libraries



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EDITORIAL AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE Inaugural Meeting of the 38th Session of the Association of Assistant Librarians (Section of the Library Association) will be held on Wednesday, 12th October, at 7 p.m., at the London School of Economics.

The chair will be taken by Sir Henry Miers, M.A., D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., President of the Library Association. The speaker of the evening will be Mr. A. P. Herbert, poet, playwright, novelist, and mainstay of *Punch*—his subject "Something funny."

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Anticipating the introduction of the new Library Association Syllabus of Professional Examinations in 1933, the Council has found it necessary to re-organize the whole of its series of correspondence courses. Particulars of the new courses are given below.

Courses, Subjects, and Fees

The Correspondence Courses comprise ten lessons running from January to December (see special exceptions under Intermediate Section), and consist of a prescribed selection of technical reading, advice on study, practical work, and questions or subjects for essays upon which the Tutor will write comments or corrections.

The subjects treated and the fees for each section are as follows :

Elementary Section.—The Course covers the whole of the Library Association requirements for this section. Fee, £1 11s. 6d.

Intermediate Section.—Part 1, Library Classification; Part 2, Library Cataloguing. Total inclusive fee, £2 2s. Either section may be taken separately for a fee of £1 5s. Alternative courses of ten lessons are also available in these two subjects, the fees being £1 5s. per subject. The alternative courses cover the same ground as the normal courses, but run for six months only, commencing in July and November of each year.

Final Section.—Part 1, English Literary History OR Literary History of Science OR Literary History of Economics and Commerce. Fee, £1 11s. 6d. Part 2, Bibliography and Book Selection AND Historical Bibliography OR Indexing and Abstracting. Fee, £2 2s. *Important.*—Students wishing to take Indexing and Abstracting must give one month's notice before the usual closing date, as this alternative subject will be covered only if a sufficient number of students apply. Part 3, Advanced Library Administration, including either of the specialized alternatives. Fee, £2 2s.

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Any person not a member of the Association may take the above courses, but only on payment of double the fees shown above.

Applications

Students wishing to enter for any course should obtain application forms from Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24.

Applications, together with the necessary fees, must reach Mr. Martin before 20th December for the ordinary courses, and for the alternative courses in the Intermediate Section before 20th June and 20th October respectively. After these dates no applications will be considered.

The first ordinary course begins in January 1933, the first alternative course during July 1933.

Library Association Examinations

Students are particularly advised to make themselves familiar with the new syllabus of professional examinations, full particulars of which will be found in the L.A. Yearbook, obtainable from the Secretary of the L.A., price 2s. 6d., post free.

The news that the *London Mercury* is reducing its price to 1s. as a last desperate measure to avoid extinction should be an occasion of some alarm to librarians. It is superfluous to enlarge upon the services which this journal has rendered to contemporary letters, both by its sound criticism and its enlightened outlook; it is enough to say that it would be a grievous loss to us if the *Mercury* disappeared. Public librarians can do something to help. We suggest that those libraries which do not at present subscribe should place at least one copy of the *London Mercury* on their order lists, while those who now buy one or more copies should treble their orders. There is room for a copy of such a journal in the lending library, newsroom, and staffroom of every central and branch library in the country, and such a gesture on the part of library authorities would offset the more ignoble economies which some have recently put into effect.

The Council decided at its last meeting to urge all members of the Section to support the Appeal of the Library Association for its Headquarters Fund. We realize that the very limited resources of many of our members make it impossible for them to contribute any substantial sum to the Fund. This difficulty has been overcome by the Bethnal Green Public Libraries staff. They have decided to subscribe 3d. per month each to the Fund for a period of seven years. The Deputy-Librarian, the originator of the scheme, will forward each year, in advance, a cheque representing the sum of the year's contributions—in this case 2 guineas.

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In his appeal for the fund at the Annual Meeting of the Library Association at Bournemouth, Mr. E. A. Savage spoke in terms of the highest appreciation of this co-operative effort. We hope that the example of Bethnal Green will be followed by every Library staff in the country. If this is done, it will be possible for the A.A.L. membership to make a very substantial contribution to the Headquarters Appeal Fund. How substantial will be realized when it is pointed out that a contribution of 1d. a week from every member of the Section would, in the seven years' duration of the Appeal, provide over £2,500—more than a third of the total sum required to establish the Library Association in a position of financial security.

Will a representative of each library staff adopting this scheme send to THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT the name of his library and the amount contributed each week by individual members of his staff? If this is done, we shall be able to publish with pride in our succeeding issues a record of what is being done by the members of our Section for the Association of which they claim to be, not only in numbers, the strongest part.



COUNCIL NOTES

AT a meeting of the Council of the Section, held on Wednesday, 13th September, a letter was received from Mr. W. G. Fry, F.L.A., President of the Section. Mr. Fry informed the Council that he had been appointed Deputy City Librarian of Manchester and regretted that, in consequence of this appointment, it would be impossible for him to attend meetings of the L.A. Council as a delegate of the Section. The Council congratulated Mr. Fry on his promotion, and it was agreed that a Divisional representative be asked to serve in his place on the L.A. Council.

The dates of meetings of the Council are to be fixed for a year in advance, and will appear in the Librarian's Calendar which is printed in the L.A. Yearbook.

The Council has decided to support, as strongly as possible, the "Headquarters Appeal" recently issued by the L.A. Council. A further announcement appears in our "Editorial."

Books and pamphlets published in the new A.A.L. Series are not to be made available for loan from the Association's Library.

The Finance Committee reported upon a proposal from Mr. Revie, that the expenses of provincial councillors should be paid each time they attend a meeting of the Council, instead of once annually, as at present. The Council was informed that such a suggestion was quite impracticable at present, since, if all

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provincial councillors attended every meeting of the Council at the expense of the Association, the Section would be bankrupt within a year.

Mr. K. G. Hunt has tendered his resignation from the Council upon his appointment as Librarian to the Mitcham U.D.C. The Council have decided to ask him to remain in office until the end of the present session.

The Committees of the Council for the current year are :

Press and Publications.—Mrs. Callander; Misses Alexander, Gerard, and Stubbs; Messrs. Gardner, Hurford, Sellick, Stevenson, Vale; the Hon. Editor, and representatives (to be elected) from the South-Western and Midland Divisions.

Education and Library.—Messrs. Chubb, Jones, Martin, Pugsley, Seymour Smith, and Woods.

Finance and General Purposes.—Messrs. Austing, Cooper, Firth, Hunt, Revie, and the Hon. Treasurer.

Policy.—Messrs. Chubb, Firth, and Seymour Smith; The Hon. Editor, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, and Chairman of each Policy Committee appointed by Divisions.

Co-ordination.—Miss Gerard; Messrs. Chubb and Hunt; the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary.

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 19th October, at the National Library for the Blind.

THE THIRD SUMMER SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP, BIRMINGHAM, 22ND AUG. TO 3RD SEPT., 1932

By BASIL H. SMITH, *Ipswich Public Libraries*

LIBRARIANS, while perfecting themselves in their technique, should aim at the highest possible standard of all-round efficiency, for they belong to one of the most honourable and useful of all professions. By careful study of their clients they may be able at any moment to be the means of inspiring a potential genius. There is no more human vocation than librarianship. The schoolmaster and university teacher deal with a limited number of persons, and with those persons for a limited time. It is the librarian's task to be at the disposal of every man, woman, and child of every section of the community, and throughout the whole of their lives." With this invigorating challenge the President of the Library Association, Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Mitchell, C.B.E., ended his inspiring inaugural speech at the official opening of the Library Association Summer

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School at Birmingham, on Tuesday, 23rd August, 1932. The School was organized by the Library Association as in previous years, in co-operation with the Birmingham Public Libraries Committee, and with the University of Birmingham, who placed Chancellor's Hall at Edgbaston, with its delightful grounds, at the disposal of the Association. At the conclusion of the speech, the burst of applause which greeted the President's remarks testified to the nature of the potential ideals of the students who were gathered together there from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland in order to better equip themselves for their responsible calling. Students also attended from such distant countries as Egypt and Denmark, to learn something of modern English Library practice.

The tremendous success of the 1932 School, due, to a very large extent, to the concerted efforts of a number of spirited individuals, will long live in the memories of those who had the good fortune to be present. We are specially indebted to Mr. Victor Woods, A.L.A., of the Birmingham Reference Library, who succeeded Mr. Leonard Chubb, F.L.A., on his appointment as Chief Librarian of the Ipswich Public Libraries, as secretary to the School. Mr. Woods gave of his time wholeheartedly and generously in order to prepare and carry out the syllabus and programme of events. We are also indebted to Mr. Francis J. Thacker for the enthusiasm he displayed in arranging a number of the excursions, and to Miss M. G. Baker, F.L.A., who acted as Honorary Treasurer. Throughout the period of the School, the Staff of the Birmingham Public Libraries, headed by the City Librarian, Mr. H. M. Cashmore, F.L.A., rendered every assistance to the students, and made co-operation in professional matters an easy matter.

Seven courses of lectures were completed on the lines of the examination syllabus of the Library Association, and were delivered as follows: "Dr. Johnson and his circle," by Mr. T. C. Kemp; "Cataloguing," by Mr. L. Chubb, F.L.A.; "Library routine," by Messrs. L. Chubb, F.L.A., and G. E. Flack, M.A. ("University Libraries"), and Miss A. S. Cooke, F.L.A. ("County Libraries"); "Palæography and archive science," by Mr. V. H. Galbraith, M.A.; "Bibliography," by Mr. H. Woodbine, A.L.A.; "Classification," by Mr. G. L. Burton, A.L.A.; and "Library Organization," by Mr. C. Jackson, F.L.A. In connexion with these lectures, a number of special bibliographical exhibitions (covering such topics as "Modern fine printing," "Book illustration methods," "The Development of handwriting," "Special bibliographies," and "The Growth of the book") were arranged at the Reference Library, and visits to the following places were organized: the new branch library at Acock's Green, Birmingham; the Bookbindery of Mr. Edmund Worrall, Edmund Street; the Libraries of the University of Birmingham (led by the Librarian, Dr. W. Bonser, B.A., Ph.D., F.L.A.), where the classification scheme of the Library of Congress is in use; the Library of the Selly Oak Colleges; the Library of the Birmingham

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Oratory; Worcester City and County Libraries; the Printing Works of Messrs. The Birmingham Printers, Ltd., Hill Street; and the Works of Messrs. V. Siviter Smith & Co., Ltd. (Process Engravers).

On Wednesday, 24th August, Miss Margery Quigley, Librarian of Clairmont, New Jersey, U.S.A., who by a happy chance had decided to spend her summer in England, spoke to the School on "Library publicity in the United States." Library publicity has been carried on to a much greater extent in the United States than in this country, but the lecturer touched upon several interesting and suggestive methods which might well receive the attention of English librarians. Miss Quigley laid special emphasis on the tremendous differences which had taken place in American methods of publicity since the recent devastating crisis. The aim of the American Librarian, now, she said, was to concentrate on quality rather than on quantity. Are we, I wonder, in face of our futile statistical competition, able to say, with such confidence that we also are concentrating on quality?

In addressing the School on "The Reading public—how far should we give them what they want?" Miss A. S. Cooke, F.L.A., Librarian Kent County Library, displayed great courage in tackling this thorny and controversial problem. Miss Cooke, however, came to the only possible conclusion, that we must strike a middle path, but at the same time see that our book stocks are, on the whole, slightly above the average mental level of our clientele.

The position of the University library in regard to municipal libraries was outlined by Dr. R. Offor, B.A., Ph.D., F.L.A., Librarian Leeds University, in a lecture entitled, "University and municipal libraries: a contrast," on Wednesday, 31st August. Dr. Offor explained the special difficulties with which a university librarian is met, and by a number of amusing episodes taken from his personal experiences showed how the rules and regulations, which work so well in a public library, are worse than useless in a library of this character. In concluding the lecture, Dr. Offor said that while he considered it inevitable that university libraries, owing to their very nature, must remain rather isolated in the library world, he was sorry that co-operation with municipal libraries in the same districts had been neglected as it had been. In certain fields, especially where the large city reference library was concerned, this co-operation might well be established to their mutual advantage. "The Library Association, in its efforts towards the establishment of a national library service," he said, "cannot well continue to overlook the valuable resources of our University libraries; and on the other hand, the university librarian can no longer afford to maintain his traditional attitude of aloofness and independence."

Perhaps the most provocative of all the special lectures was that of Mr. J. P. Lamb, F.L.A., Chief Librarian Sheffield Public Libraries, on "Public library

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organization—a revaluation.” Among the most challenging of the lecturer’s statements was an appeal for the abolition of close classification, which, he said, was unintelligible to the average borrower, in favour of a much more broad, easily comprehended scheme. Mr. Lamb, however, dealt most specifically with the growing subject of “book display” which figures prominently among current professional topics, and which is arousing keen interest in some of our public libraries. So enthusiastic was the lecturer on this subject (for he has carried out the idea to the full in the Sheffield Public Libraries apparently with very great success) that I for one, at any rate, was led to forget that money was largely responsible for the possibility of such attractive experiments. The lecture was excellently illustrated with lantern slides.

On Thursday, 1st September, Mr. E. A. Savage, F.L.A., Principal Librarian Edinburgh Public Libraries, spoke on some special aspects of classification. He deplored the modern tendency towards centralization of cataloguing and classification, and made a sincere appeal for opposition to any steps which might be taken to deprive the individual library of what is, after all, he said, largely a means whereby the librarian may get to know his book-stock.

The excursions to neighbouring places of interest were particularly successful, and visits were paid to Stratford-on-Avon and district; Lichfield, where the party saw the birthplace of Dr. Samuel Johnson under the guidance of the Mayor of Lichfield (Alderman W. A. Wood), and the beautiful Cathedral, whose history and treasures were detailed by Canon Stockley; the Dassett Hills and Chesterton Mill; Worcester Cathedral and Library, where members were conducted by Canon and Mrs. Blake; Maxstoke Castle, when students were invited to join in a ramble organized by the Midland Division; and the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, for a fine performance of Shaw’s new play, “Too true to be good.” Students were not tied, of course, to the official programme, and at least one party tried the patience of the organizing committee by substituting a perfect day at Warwick and Kenilworth in place of the excursion to Dassett Hills. We all agreed that the greatest day of all was the visit to Stratford and district. On our arrival at the new Memorial Theatre, we were met by Sir Archie Flower, who conducted us over the building and behind the scenes of the stage. To him we owe our sincere thanks. Such was our admiration for this unique piece of architectural planning that many of the students resolved to stay in order to see a performance by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company. Again we took advantage of the good nature of our leaders, and at 12.30 the next morning a very weary, but very contented party of library assistants crept fearfully through the corridors of Chancellor’s Hall—to bed.

To sum up: What is this Summer School about which I have written so long? Wherein lies its value to students? In the social contact or the lectures?

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The tutors themselves know that they can only deal with theory and supposition and rarely with reality. The ideal library of the examination is a strange, undefined institution capable of infinite transformation according to the view-point or personal convictions of the individual. No one would suggest that we attended the Summer School with the idea of being taught to understand this meaningless idol. Those who did go with this intention were surely sadly disillusioned, for amidst the many conflicting opinions as to what constitutes the personality of this unknown, they found even greater confusion to add to their bewilderment. We may sympathize with them, but we must ourselves realize that they have failed to understand the purpose of the School. The Summer School is a hive of opposing ideals and methods, and as such is a living organism, capable of germinating new enthusiasm and of infusing a fresh spirit into old truths. In theory, then, the value of the School lies in its lectures; in practice, while the lectures are of great help to the student for examination purposes, the inspiration of the School lies in its informal debates and discussions, and in this clash or confirmation of ideals. I have rather laboured this particular point, but I cannot over-emphasize it to those who have not yet attended the School.

This report has not been presented to you in the traditional manner, bristling with tabulated statistics or long extracts from plagiaristic speeches, but in a manner calculated, it is hoped, to interest you in the real work of the School—the practical work whose inestimable value is wholly omitted from the official syllabus. As it is, the uninitiated are only left to guess what lies behind that dignified and forbidding institution—"The Library Association Summer School of Librarianship." I am in no way connected with the organizing committee (as doubtless you will have realized!), but I am a disinterested person who has sincere belief in the aims and ideals of the organization, and in this capacity I invite you to remember the School when next you consider your holiday programme. I will promise you a merry company, an abundance of new ideas, happy recreation, and, if you wish it, facilities for serious study.



VALUATIONS

By FRANK M. GARDNER

The Library world, July 1932

THERE is too little change in the library world, and when the periodical of that name appears in a new guise, one is inclined to hail the alteration as a welcome sign of the times.

The new *Library world* is certainly fresher in appearance than the old. The

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depressing drab of the cover has gone, replaced by a sprightly yellow, though the name plate is rather a blot. The page is larger, and a feature has been made of illustration.

The modernizing of format in a magazine usually means a modernizing of outlook. This number promises well in a number of things, one digs into the meaty symposium on children's reading with a sigh of gratitude. But the whole issue was spoiled for me by a violent and denunciatory editorial, which seems compounded equally of misstatement and misunderstanding. Mr. Osbert Sitwell need no longer regret his Bourbons, for here we have Bourbonism at its worst.

The editorial begins: "There is, however, a spirit abroad which finds expression in other pages than our own, in revolt against the established theories and practices of libraries regarded as successful." I am glad that the *Library world* acknowledges its own share in broadcasting the new spirit, though to give hospitality to opinion and then denounce it editorially seems rather like a bird fouling its own nest. I am more concerned, however, with the other pages referred to, which are presumably these. The "spirit" is, I imagine, the spirit which animates these Valuations. I do not complain of that; the author of Valuations, whoever he is, never has been liked by the "Library World." If, of course, I flatter myself in thinking that I am one of the objects of this attack, I am sorry. But I feel bound to protest against the mangling of views held by a minority of conscientious present-day librarians. It is one thing to have one's theories attacked. It is another to have them distorted. The worst form of misstatement is that which comes sufficiently near the truth to appear plausible. The following samples are examples of that type of misstatement.

"This spirit resigns any claim of the public library to be an educational, or even intellectual, institution, and makes the lowest type of reader dictator of both stocks and services." "It condemns cataloguing rules and systematic classification." "It affirms that in book display it has made a revolution." "It even goes so far as to describe library economy as a farrago of nonsense."

These statements, except the first, are in a way true. Taken baldly, they are heresies. Taken with their contexts, they fall in as parts of a statement of policy. The main tenet of the new librarianship is that one should not put the cart before the horse. Library work has grown lopsidedly, and these statements are part of an attempt to restore a balance.

Public libraries were intended for the people, and it is surely obvious that the main problem is one of getting people to use them. I have said this so often and in so many ways that I am getting tired of saying it, but it appears that a thousand reiterations are not enough. Shallow philosophizing about educational and social work is no approach to the problem. Tinkering with classification schemes and catalogues, with non-slip ladders and adjustable shelving, is no approach to the

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problem. The problem is one of books, and the modern spirit protests against too much attention to library economy, because elaboration of technique is not desirable at the present time. We need instead a simplification of technique and a reduction of money spent on technique.

I agree with the Editor of the *Library world* that public libraries can do a great educational and social work. To meet him on his own ground, are they doing such a work? Do public libraries occupy their rightful place as a cultural unit? What research and thought have been expended on the necessary duty of efficient and sufficient book supply, of changing non-reader into reader, of low-grade reader into high-grade reader? What study has there been of the mental processes behind choice in reading, of the connection between mass demand and individual demand? Is the young librarian of to-day trained to take his place as a worker in an educational and social cause? The answer to all these questions is, I submit, a negative one. The only known method of acquiring culture is by an increase in ratiocinative powers achieved by comparative reading. Public libraries show literally no recognition of that fact. The chief criterion in book selection is information, and the ideal book, from the librarian's point of view, is the one which contains the largest number of safe, solid, and incontrovertible facts. But for every reader seeking information on beekeeping, china collecting, or the suitability of Blackpool as a holiday resort, there are a dozen, a hundred, seeking interpretation or reflection of life. When forced to turn to imaginative, or perhaps I should call it interpretative literature, the librarian feels safe on the classics (hence their inevitable appearance in library reports as evidence of cultural reading), but turns in hesitation from anything which has not received the approbation of posterity.

The dictator of stocks is not the lowest type of reader, but that infinitely worse creature, the lower middle brow, who regards with contempt any taste lower than his own, and with fear and suspicion any taste higher.

With the problems of book selection, go the problems of book using. Well, book display may not in itself be a revolution, but it is at least the first shot in one. Book display is just the beginning of an attempt to guide reading along definite lines, and thus marks a new phase in librarianship.

There is still an enormous hinterland of untrodden ground awaiting the speculations of a future James Duff Brown. The new movement is sowing a seed. It will be for future generations to inherit.

I have written these notes more in sorrow than in anger. Sorrow, and something of weariness. For I become increasingly aware that time and nitro-glycerine are the only successful reformers. Words, however honeyed, however persuasive, however dynamic, are useless. And, as I have said before somewhere, I am not a good banner-carrier.

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CHILDREN'S READING

One thousand books for boys and girls—Dagenham.

What shall I read?—Bethnal Green.

Best books for boys and girls—Hornsey.

One would think that the possible variations of method in compiling a list were not many, and I, when the heap has grown very high and the inspiration dwindled very low, have often said as much. I must now take that back, since I am here confronted with a striking versatility. Apart from their subject, none of these lists bears the least resemblance. Not only are they different in format and technique of compilation, but they are to some extent different in scope. This last difference is perhaps lucky, since I am thereby debarred from comparing the publications with one another (I often think that the judgment of Paris marked the beginnings of communistic ideas).

I will take the Dagenham catalogue first. It costs one penny, and once again I recommend my readers to an extravagance.

Some months ago, remarks of mine on a Dagenham publication drew forth anguished protests from Mr. O'Leary. I recall the occasion, not to savour the scalp, but because the praise I am about to give might be thought to disagree with my previous disparagement, and I very cleverly design to forestall criticism. For this pamphlet is the obvious complement of the other. It is designed to do for the junior library what the other was designed to do for the adult. But one man's meat—and whereas I criticized Dagenham's previous list as being unnecessary I commend this as being most useful. I criticized the other publication as containing too advanced books for the average taste; I take this one to my heart when I read that "the books . . . are not 'improving,' but chosen to catch the imagination of young minds."

But before I say anything of the contents of this catalogue I wish to say a few words on its format. If anyone were compiling a list of the points of format desirable in a children's catalogue he would do well to have this one in front of him. Would that all the books it mentions were as well got up!

In an ideal children's catalogue, the cover should be attractive—here we have a delightful map of "bookland," which arouses immediate curiosity. The arrangement should be easy to follow—this one is simple in the extreme. The contents are divided into eighteen sections, arranged roughly in Dewey order, but without the Dewey terminology, and without its numbers. Each section heading is supplemented by a short descriptive paragraph. The typography should be clear, so that youthful eyes may not be strained. The use of sans serif caps for headings and a lavish distribution of white space make here a most luxurious page. There are a few minor matters which show the thought that has been given.

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Dates of publication are entirely omitted, the hieroglyphics of collation, one of my pet abominations, are omitted, and illustration is expanded to its proper length. And, thank heaven, there is no preface explaining the Dewey classification.

I noticed only a few omissions in a prolonged browse, and since the catalogue contains only a thousand items, I suppose it is possible that they are sins rather of commission. But Hughes's *Spider's palace*, De La Mare's *Three royal monkeys*, and Skipper's *Meeting pool* are surely worthy of a place in any children's catalogue. And where are the romances of Wells? I would have liked to see, too, some of the modern adventure books generally written for adults, and since re-issued in cheap editions. I call to mind *The Kanchenjunga adventure* and Evans's *Escaping club*. There are a number of others eminently suitable for older children. On the other hand, I confess to a slight shock on seeing an entry of *The Scarlet letter*.

After Dagenham, examining the Bethnal Green *What shall I read?* is rather like viewing Niagara after the bathroom tap. The title is rather unfortunate, since were I a child reader at Bethnal Green, I should be more likely to say "What shall I read?" after looking at the catalogue than before. This is far from being a mere list. It runs to 250 pages, and contains entries of 6,500 titles. It is always more difficult to review a collection than a selection, and I am tempted to say, "Colossal!" and turn to the next item. I do not want to do the Bethnal Green catalogue an injustice. There are several obvious arguments in favour of the printed catalogue for children—too obvious for me to repeat here. There are points, too, of format that call for commendation. A certain neatness of execution, a noticeable lack of misprints (always an achievement in a large catalogue), a dignified and attractive cover, a clear and well-tied-up dictionary arrangement—all the things one asks for in the way of style.

But there is a certain oppressiveness in profusion, and I confess that in contemplating this catalogue I have much the same feeling as, say, when I view Delacroix's pictures. "Admirable," I say, and stand back to get a better view. The picture still fills the middle distance. "Excellent," I murmur, and walk away. I am impressed but not thrilled.

No doubt, when one is catering for a large public (and the Bethnal Green children's library must be one of the largest in the country) the question of variety becomes an important one, and I know well enough that the number of children's books published worth the paper they are written on is lamentably low. But the two pages here of Henty, the page of Ballantyne, the page of Kingston, the half-page of Fenn—are they read sufficiently to warrant their retention on the shelves?

The obstinacy with which Henty, in particular, appears full panoplied on library shelves surprises me. Those dreary accounts of battles, taken in many cases in chunks from contemporary history books, the inevitable rise in rank of the

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hero (whose bottom should have been well spanked in his youth !)—one can forecast with certainty that about page 50 he will catch the attention of the general, about page 100 he will be made a lieutenant, and about page 200 he will perform miraculous and incredible feats with dispatches—what an aridity of plot ! Children's classics ? What nonsense ! The man couldn't write as well as Charles Garvice. One would search a modern adult library in vain for the works of that author, or Ouida, or Mrs. Braddon. Why then, those unbroken rows of Henty, and Kingston, and Fenn ? I suppose we must put it down to retrospective affection.

It is perhaps a little unfair to place the Hornsey publication beside its magnificent neighbours, since it is only a cyclostyled list, which appears at first sight unimposing.

I mention it, however, because it embodies an idea which is an interesting development of *Books to read*.

This list is issued, not primarily for children, but for adults, and an accompanying letter tells me that the books mentioned are exhibited in the Central Library for inspection by teachers and parents, with a view to stimulating the buying and reading of the best current children's books. The list gives publishers and prices, and is annotated with extracts from the responsible reviews.

The idea is a good one, and, except for one difficulty, worthy of imitation. The difficulty is, of course, the books themselves. If they are bought especially for exhibition the children's library suffers from tardy addition. If they are taken from the children's library for exhibition, their covers will not do justice to their contents. It would be interesting to know how Hornsey meets the problem.

I would implore Hornsey not to use that ghastly cobalt-blue coated paper for a cover again. Every time I see it I shudder. Every time I touch it, I experience that excruciating sensation as of having a piece of wool drawn across one's teeth.

TWO REPORTS: SHEFFIELD AND WILLESDEN

Out of the flood of reports which has descended on me this month, I select these two for primary consideration. One, because I like its contents. The other, because I like its style.

About Sheffield, I feel that not enough is known. It is not quite on the list of libraries of great reputation. Its name has not the magic of Croydon and Coventry. Not yet. I don't really know why. For things happen at Sheffield. After building the second finest branch library in England (the finest is in Leeds), Sheffield set about building the finest Central. And when that is finished, Sheffield will take its rightful place in the hierarchy. It deserves a high place now, of course. Issues of three million and three-quarters—6·85 books *per capita*—27·90 of the population registered as borrowers—these are impressive figures. One might

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almost call them staggering, since one reads in the report that "owing to the overwhelming use of the libraries, it has not been considered advisable to continue general publicity methods intended to attract new readers."

One notices, in passing, several important steps towards the new librarianship. Formation of a central book pool, abolition of fiction catalogues, detailed processes in book preparation abandoned—here are the beginnings of an attack on the thickets of technique which surround us.

Although, as a good Northerner, I should despise anything that comes from the south, Willesden's report is in many ways as interesting as Sheffield's. One of Willesden's chief strengths is in its chairmen, who are not only keen on their charge, but able to write about it in a pleasantly discursive manner. The chairman this year laments that his year of office has been an uneventful one in the history of the system. He has no cause; any year in which circulation figures increase by 25 per cent. is an eventful one.

I cannot resist quoting the chairman's remark on the 1931 Conference: "From a social point of view excellent, but the papers submitted were of little interest, since they dealt largely with county libraries." Really, Mr. Chairman!

One other item I found most interesting. I advocated some months ago the general abolition of adult lectures and the substitution or extension of talks to children. This has been done at Willesden, and I have the pleasant sensations of a successful tipster when I read that "the change has met with extraordinary success."



BOURNEMOUTH, 1932

THOSE who go to Bournemouth are afflicted before they start. Every half-wit who learns of their destination assumes that look of inevitability that precedes a platitude and says, "Oh, but it's so relaxing!" Like all platitudes, this is definitely a lie. I was not relaxed. On the contrary, in company with hundreds of delegates, I led the strenuous life. I rushed from hall to hall, listening in my periods of repose to papers and addresses that would have been heavy going in Skegness. If further proof of Bournemouth's tonic properties be needed, consider the feat of Hilton Smith, who spent his days in Bournemouth and his nights in Hendon, oscillating between the two places like an animated shuttle. There were other evidences which will appear later.

We began our labours on Monday evening, when Professor Peers, of University College, Nottingham, read a paper on the "Supply of books to adult classes." It was a very able performance, of its kind, but it suffered from the fact that Mr. Peers is a specialist. He has his being in a world of adult classes, and he sees public libraries primarily as a source of supplying those textbooks which are needed by his

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adults. He spent some time carefully avoiding invidious comparisons between county and municipal libraries, but it was plain that Professor Peers and the county librarians have been on cordial terms for some time, while we of the municipalities have disappointed him. I listened with pleasure to the reply of Mr. L. R. McColvin, who, with equal care, refrained from putting on record his opinion that adult classes are, taking them by and wide, collections of worthy cranks. The discussion that followed was notable, chiefly because of a new departure in platform practice. As each speaker concluded his address, he subsided gracefully into a vacant chair on the platform, and beamed on the new arrival. Most of the speakers being committee-men, and having the manner, towards the end of the discussion the platform looked more like a civic welcome than anything else.

Later in the evening we were received by the Mayor and Mayoress in Bourne-mouth's marble halls, and spent one of the most genial evenings of the week. Though I am unique, in that I do not dance, I noted with pleasure that our most venerated leaders swing a very efficient toe.

The Presidential Address on Tuesday morning was a model of what a presidential address to a learned society should be. It will appear in full in the *Library Association Record*. I have to confess that, after hearing Sir Henry Miers, I spent the afternoon bathing, and thus missed Lieut. Colonel Mitchell on "Library Budgets." I atoned by my presence at the evening meeting, devoted to a discussion of "Library lighting." (Do not read from the last sentence that this was a penance.) Mr. Hilton Smith read an able paper, in which he performed the astonishing feat of being original and interesting on the subject of windows and skylights. He was followed by Mr. H. Lingard, whose paper on "Artificial lighting" proved the self-evident fact that the time-lag between the invention of a new system of lighting and its discovery by the borough engineer is about twenty years.

I think it will be more acceptable to the powers that be if I pass lightly over Tuesday evening. It was announced that the President and Council would meet members and delegates amongst the stalls at the Winter Gardens. The President did his stuff with unflinching cordiality, but a distressing number of boiled shirts emerged from their wrappings to gaze upon suns that were not there.

Wednesday was a full day. Mr. Edgar Osborne described the results of an "Analysis of children's reading." I can only say that his results were mildly astonishing. Not in the sense that they were startlingly different from the results of other enquiries, but astonishing, in that Mr. Osborne showed, with profuse documentation, that those of us who actually issue books to children with our own hands are living in a world of illusion. I hope to test his conclusions for myself, and to publish in these pages a further analysis. Modesty and a lingering feeling

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of having taken my head out of the lion's mouth with a split second to spare forbid me to report my own paper at length. It is enough to say that a pleasant morning was had by all, particularly by Alderman Barton of Sheffield.

The A.A.L. Sectional meeting was eminently successful. Mr. F. Seymour Smith, in his paper "Then and now," presented lucidly and with interest a mass of statistical information as to the hours and conditions of work in libraries, and made his subject live. The discussion which followed was notable for the sympathy and understanding displayed by those chief librarians who spoke, and for the absence of committee men.

The Annual Business Meeting was exhilarating if not productive. My typewriter refuses the task of reporting what was nearly a riot. I content myself with the suggestion that next year, instead of a Chairman, there should be a referee, and that any person moving a motion when there are already more than five other motions with their complementary amendments before the meeting, be declared off-side.

On Thursday afternoon the most valuable meeting of the Conference was held. This was the Round-Table meeting on "Small and branch libraries." The procedure was simple. Mr. E. A. Savage presided without other support, and opened the ball by being provocative on the very wide subject tabled. The whole of the rest of the meeting was taken up by a discussion which chased red herrings up the most peculiar byways, but which produced more really valuable information than a hundred formal papers. It is good to learn that we are to be allowed to talk shop on a large scale at every Conference.

It is impossible for any but the official Conference Report to do justice to Bournemouth. The programme was so full, the interests represented so varied, that the report of any individual must be scrappy to the point of incoherence. It was a good week, and for me one of its pleasantest features was the large number of assistants who were present and who contributed to the discussions. I conclude with a bow to tradition and an assertion that by far the most valuable features of the Conference were those informal encounters at which ideas and experience can be exchanged and inspiration for the coming year may be absorbed.

T. E. C.

THE DIVISIONS

NORTH-EAST DIVISION

THE North-East Division has revived its scheme of oral tuition in the subjects of the Library Association examinations. Instituted a few years ago, the classes were discontinued when the national scheme of correspondence courses came into being. Recently, increasing demands from members for the

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oral form of tuition have encouraged the Committee to reconsider the matter, with the result that classes in the subjects of the Syllabus have been arranged for the December 1932 and May 1933 examinations.

These classes, of course, are alternative to the correspondence courses, and will be conducted by the Panel tutors in the area.

Further particulars can be obtained upon application to the *Hon. Educational Secretary, Mr. E. Patterson, A.L.A., The Library, Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.*

W. E. HURFORD,
Hon. Secretary.

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION

A meeting of the South-Western Division, held at Romsey on the 14th September, was attended by representatives from Southampton, Bournemouth, Winchester, Gosport, and Portsmouth. A programme full of interest had been arranged by Mr. A. H. Davis (Chief Librarian, Southampton), who throughout the day acted as host. Leaving Southampton by motor-coach the party first visited Romsey Abbey, where Mr. R. M. Fanstone gave a particularly clear and interesting history of the Abbey. This was followed by a visit to the War Memorial Park and tea. Mr. A. Ll. Carver voiced the thanks of the Division to Mr. Davis for his generous hospitality and excellent programme.

A short business meeting followed, at which it was decided to form a "Forward Policy Committee," and preliminary proposals were also discussed for an extension of the Division's activities. Mr. A. Ll. Carver was chosen to speak at a meeting to be held in London next year.

A visit was then paid to King John's Hunting Lodge, which was only discovered in 1927. After a thorough tour of inspection the party returned to Southampton by way of Hursley, the home of John Keble.

H. S.

A DANCE FOR MEMBERS AND THEIR FRIENDS

WILL BE HELD AT THE SAMSON CLARK HALL, MORTIMER STREET, W.I, ON WEDNESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER (NOT 9TH NOVEMBER AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED). TICKETS, PRICE 4s., INCLUDING REFRESHMENTS, MAY BE OBTAINED FROM W. C. PUGSLEY, BRANCH LIBRARY, CHADWELL HEATH, DAGENHAM, OR FROM ANY MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL.

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WREXHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

APPPLICATIONS are invited for the post of Librarian at a salary of £200 per annum. The open-access system is about to be installed, and the successful candidate will be required to supervise the necessary arrangements. Candidates should hold library qualifications, and should have had experience of library work. A knowledge of Welsh is desirable.

Applications, stating age, experience, and qualifications, with not more than three testimonials, should be sent not later than 20th October, 1932, to

The Hon. Secretary,
Public Library,
Wrexham, N. Wales.

NEW MEMBERS

ERIC A. AMEY (Edmonton); Miss K. A. Armstrong (Ealing); Donovan A. Dawe (Guildhall Library); E. W. Fryer (Newark); Ivy M. Green (Dr. Williams' Library); Una M. Griffin (Chiswick); Andrew C. Harper (Belfast); Stanley C. Holliday (Hendon); William S. J. Turk (Acton); Dorothy C. Legg (St. Albans); Alastair D. Nicolson (Ross and Cromarty County, Dingwall); Joan M. Vale (Hackney); Miss I. R. Whyman (East Ham).

Midland Division.—Bernard G. Franklin, Nancibel Joseph, Olive F. Smith, Emily D. Sutton, William E. Yates (Birmingham); Wilbert L. Clayfield (Birmingham University Library); W. Ewart Owen (Leamington Spa); T. M. Westhead (Loughborough); Marjorie Wallace (Oldbury).

North-Western Division.—Hugh Wilson (Stalybridge).

South Wales Division.—G. I. John, D. G. Williams (Glamorgan County, Bridgend).

South-Western Division.—Jack A. C. West (Gosport); Miss E. M. Peddy (Portsmouth).

Yorkshire Division.—Mabel Dawes (Bradford); Miss M. Walsh (Leeds); Miss M. L. Fewster, H. H. Howarth, H. J. Stuffs (Scarborough).

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